

HONORING SOUTH DAKOTA'S SMALL BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the values and spirit that helped early settlers thrive and prosper in the harsh conditions of life on the prairie are alive and well today in South Dakota.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to meet someone who embodies many of the values and ideals that the great state of South Dakota was built upon. Phillip Clark, owner and President of Hansen Manufacturing Corporation of Sioux Falls, is one of 53 persons honored this week by the Small Business Administration as part of its celebration of National Small Business Week. For over two decades, Phil has guided his company through a variety of complex challenges and built a thriving business. In the process, he has made an important contribution to our state, and to the city of Sioux Falls.

As a manufacturer of conveyor belt assemblies, Phil invented an enclosed belt conveyor system. Anyone who has worked in or around a grain elevator knows the importance of minimizing dust; it is one of the most important safety steps that can be taken to prevent fires and explosions. This enclosed belt system has helped a number of grain facilities improve the safety of their operations, and dramatically changed the way that grain and other bulk materials are moved.

Phil was able to develop this system because he listened to what his customers wanted, and he acted to fill that need. It is a basic lesson that every successful business owner must know: listen to your customer.

While Phil has maintained a clear focus on his company's future, he has also taken the steps necessary to position his company to deal with current business conditions. As a manufacturer of conveyor belt systems, Hansen Manufacturing derives much of its business from grain elevators, feed manufacturers, and other companies that process agricultural goods and other bulk materials. Because of the continued crisis in our agricultural markets, many of these companies have faced extremely difficult business conditions over the past few years, resulting in equally difficult times for their suppliers. Furthermore, domestic weakness has been compounded by weakness in foreign markets, which have become increasingly important for Hansen Manufacturing.

While short-term business conditions have been challenging, Phil has been able to successfully grow his business while making critical investments in new product lines. His successful stewardship of Hansen Manufacturing serves as an example to all small business people in South Dakota. I commend the Small Business Administration for recognizing his outstanding work.

In South Dakota, almost all businesses are small businesses, and that's true nationwide. But in South Dakota

small businesses are big business. I thank the Small Business Administration for its work with business owners such as Phil Clark, and I congratulate Phil for his hard work and his outstanding contributions to his community and state.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, May 26, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,602,150,880,889.93 (Five trillion, six hundred two billion, one hundred fifty million, eight hundred eighty thousand, eight hundred eighty-nine dollars and ninety-three cents).

One year ago, May 26, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,506,917,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred six billion, nine hundred seventeen million).

Five years ago, May 26, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,596,085,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred ninety-six billion, eighty-five million).

Ten years ago, May 26, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,779,342,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred seventy-nine billion, three hundred forty-two million) which reflects a doubling of the debt—an increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,822,808,880,889.93 (Two trillion, eight hundred twenty-two billion, eight hundred eight million, eight hundred eighty thousand, eight hundred eighty-nine dollars and ninety-three cents) during the past 10 years.

ESSAY ON PARENTS AND TEENS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, a young Alaskan, a freshman in Colony High School in the Matanuska Valley town of Wasilla, wrote an opinion piece in the Anchorage Daily News this week which shows thoughtfulness and wisdom well beyond his 15 years.

Travis Johnson sat down at his computer the day after the tragedy at Columbine High School, and wrote from the heart his feelings and his ideas on how to prevent further tragedies like Columbine.

He showed the essay to his parents who were moved and impressed with their youngster's effort. His mother, a physician, and his dad, an insurance executive, grew up in Anchorage. While they are not hunters themselves, they have friends and family who are gun owners and who hunt.

After Travis shared his essay with his English teacher, his dad suggested that he send it to the Anchorage Daily News.

Travis refutes the ideas that guns and violence on television and in films are responsible for incidents like Columbine.

Travis believes that parents must be more and more involved with their children. He asks the parents who read his opinion piece to "talk to your kids, even though you may not want to, and your kids may act like they don't want to talk to you." And he tells teens to talk to their parents.

Mr. President, Travis Johnson's observations and ideas are important insights into how to avoid further incidents like those in Colorado and Georgia, from a teen who understands how teens feel.

I ask unanimous consent that his column from the May 25 Anchorage Daily News, titled "Parents Are the Only Answer to Teens' Problems" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:]

[From the Anchorage Daily News, May 25, 1999]

PARENTS ARE THE ONLY ANSWER TO TEENS' PROBLEMS

(By Travis Johnson)

I'm sure all of those who are reading this paper have heard of the recent Columbine High School shooting incident in which two students walked into the school and started a massacre that left 15 people dead. My heart goes out to those families and their loss. Upon hearing about this incident, I found myself very disturbed. How could two seemingly "normal" high school students (I use the term lightly because there is really no such thing as a normal high school student) be capable of doing something like this? I listened to television reports about what might be responsible for this incident. The two that seemed to be most stressed were harassment from peers and guns. It seemed as though the combination of those two automatically justified a killing spree.

First, let's think about the issue of harassment from peers. Every day I go to school, and I am judged. So is everybody else around me. I know that I've withstood my fair share of insults, and they still keep coming. And I know many people around me have it worse than I do, especially my school's own group of trench coat wearers, commonly referred to as "Goths." I'm willing to admit there are firearms in my household; I'm even proud of it. I'm not especially popular, and I could easily find out how to make bombs on the Internet. I'm sure many of the "Goths" at my school have access to the same materials. Given this information, I think that it's time I or someone else at my school went on a homicidal rampage, don't you think? I don't think so! Just because people are harassed doesn't justify a killing.

In the real world, people are harassed all the time. I think it's just life. There are mean people out there. Live with it. The killers at Columbine High School were lacking something in their personalities to do something like this. That is self-control, self-esteem and an understanding of the value of life. I think this has less to do with harassment and more with the killers themselves. If the killers had better values, this never would have happened.

Maybe firearms are to blame? I'm sure many people noticed that immediately after this incident, a series of gun-control laws were proposed, including a proposal to raise the age limit to own a handgun from 18 to 21. Do people really think that if the handgun age limit was higher, this incident would have never happened?

I hate to say it, but welcome to politics. In the world today, what people want to see is action. It has to be quick, it has to be cheap and it has to keep them from being responsible. Politicians realize this, so immediately they come up with a "solution" that fits these criteria. It doesn't have to work; the people just have to think it does. So what happens? Well, they scream, "Guns are the problem!" and we all lose more rights.